

Manager's project update: May 16, meeting

Below please find a brief summary and update of on-going projects.

Highlights:

The Town budget failed so the Council will need to make adjustments and call for a special budget meeting which will adjourn to a referendum, and then as soon as possible set a proposed mil rate. The State budget was signed and our numbers are solid, but no additional aid was included for the town.

You may have noticed that fiber is being installed around town. This is exciting news and something I have been pushing for several years in small meetings in the Capital with the Energy and Tech committee. Frontier met with us and has an aggressive schedule and competitive prices we are sharing with the public. I believe they will undercut Spectrum for a few years.

The Library renovation project bid is ready for signing next week. Will have a revised construction schedule at that time.

Police Chief Interviews were held on April 4th. The top two candidates have had a second round interview, one has withdrawn and further discussions are ensuing with the other. A background check and other requirements are needed and a Council ratification vote. This background check can be critical.

Ended up submitting four community funding applications for Congressman Courtney's and Senator Murphy's office ...two each. Have had some follow up discussions on two of them. Getting positive feedback on the Bolton sewer project.

The CRCOG transportation committee is recommending the \$3.1 million Daly Road project to the CRCOG policy board meeting in June.

South Street @ Homestead LOTCIP has been awarded to Spazzarini Construction in a very close bid, and contract documents are being prepared.

The landfill project is under construction and the transfer station is out to bid with an end of month bid opening.

CIRMA selected our high school for the second phase of automated sensors to provide early warning of mechanical failures which could lead to claims. This is at no cost to us.

Public Works/Engineering

LOTICIP grants: The Swamp Rd/Rt. 44 project is underway again. Spazzarini Construction has a September deadline. Some delays of signal posts may be expected which will have to be addressed.

Todd Penney continues to work toward getting the plans and specs for the Community Connectivity grant for sidewalks on Main Street from Hemlock Point Lane to approximately Cheney Lane. Starting to seek the required easements from the State and neighbors. It is hoped to be a summer 2022 construction project. He needs time to work so we may have to divert citizen direct contact for a week or so.

Both the softball project and transfer station preliminary designs are complete. The transfer station is out to bid and June 30 is the plan for Softball with construction this summer. We have finally been authorized to select an engineer for the LOTICIP grant for the intersection of Swamp and South, including the South Street curves, and a dip in Swamp Road. We are still getting proposals from the two firms on the CRCOG pre-selected list next week. A reminder that we will need additional funds from CNREF. Construction is hoped for the summer of 2023.

The South Street road reconstruction and sidewalks near the Homestead has been bid with Spazzarini winning the bid. The contract will be signed soon. We expect a June start.

We signed the methane venting project contract for the Miller Richardson football field, funded in part by a STEAP grant. This includes a bid alternate for a recreational softball facility in the rear left corner. Construction started with a mid-June completion.

The State preliminary design of the Hop River Road Bridge has reached the 90% design stage. The project has slipped to 2023 construction and the price has increased. Utility work may start in fall of 2022. We selected a construction inspecting firm through a public RFP process and interviews, and have hired GM2 to watch this project. The construction budget now far exceeds the funds we allocated from the last road bond. This will need to be addressed. We had the first pre bid meeting and we continue to seek assurance this will be a one year closure.

We need to replace two culverts located on Bunker Hill Road and Parker Bridge Road. We have submitted two grant applications for this year's Local Bridge grant round. The grants, if we are awarded one or both, would pay 50% of construction. Our share will need to be bonded and could be over a million dollars. These two projects are complicated by a pending Andover bridge replacement on Bunker Hill Road scheduled for this summer. We need to coordinate the three projects to assure access to houses and proper traffic detours. We also have to fully replace the Broadway culvert, which will not be eligible for State funds. We will need money for design, and this will also need to be added to a future bonding package. There is a possibility CROG will have a LOTCIP culvert round which covers 100% of construction costs, or ARPA funding.

The DEEP Microgrid project (\$4,000,000 grant) is still at a critical juncture. Tritec withdrew their buyout offer. We had meetings with two alternative funding groups last week, but the deadline for DEEP is very close. These firms have until the end of May to respond. Congressman's Murphy's office asked us to resubmit last year's community funding request. So we did.

We have hired B & L to design a new transfer station next to the DPW facility using ARP funds. Bids are out with an end of May opening and June start. An August completion is anticipated. We are looking at a temporary limited transfer station to allow softball field construction to start.

Bill Watkins submitted a DERA grant application for a replacement diesel truck with one that pollutes less. We expect to hear in a couple months (still waiting).

Juniper Drive has been reclaimed and binder coat completed. Final paving soon after manholes are raised. Hickory will get final pavement at the same time. Woodbridge Road will be getting 3 culverts and one new catch basin over the next few weeks to get ready for major pavement later this year. Then we move to Carver Lane/Loomis to do some drainage prior to paving/reclaiming. Tree work is also being planned with a focus on Nathan Hale Rd, Flanders Rd, Plains Rd, and Nathan Hale Drive with the transfer of funds that the Council approved. Crack sealing is also underway.

Public Safety - Police: We had successful Police Chief Interviews using an outside panel on April 4th. We shared the results of the public survey on leadership qualities with the panel. I have conducted second rounds with two candidates for final interviews. It is a slow process. We are now recruiting for two officers to get to full staffing, and trying to reserve a slot in the July Police Academy (if needed). Initial interviews have found at least one already certified candidate and a conditional offer of employment was made subject to background checks and other testing. A second candidate is still being reviewed. We have decided to wait for the new Chief to be appointed to make the Sergeant appointments. Our Boating Officer is not returning this summer and we have 16 candidates for the position. Interviews will be conducted soon. I started meeting with Vernon, Mansfield, Tolland, and Bolton to collaborate on a regional animal control facility and maybe services under a State grant called RPIP which is back with an August deadline. The grant would need to be through CROG, which is on board with the concept. The police dock is being relocated to Patriots Park along with the Police Boat. It will be in the water soon. We are also looking for part time dispatchers.

Fire EMS: The replacement fire truck has been ordered and with a September delivery date. Improvements at the Merrow Road substation are complete except some bathroom work. Our alternative ambulance replacement has been ordered, with no date for delivery provided. A state law was passed to direct an increase to state Medicaid ambulance rates. The department will coordinate with Coventry Cares on CoventryFest.

Finance: We are working on a bond sale date in May/June for existing projects. We are now fine-tuning pricing for ventilation at the high school and had a presentation of a renovate-as-new project for the middle school on April 19th. The School Building Committee forwarded it to the Board for a meeting in May. There is a June state deadline for Council action, and a November vote would be required. It is too significant and will be deferred for discussion likely in fall. It is a time-consuming but good evaluative process, which will identify and cost out future needs at the high and middle schools. This approach may allow the State to fund some of the HVAC and AC projects which may now be funded by new laws adding \$150 million in aid. Applications for roof funding are stuck in the final review process. We no longer believe that this process can be bid and completed this summer.

We continue to work with the Finance Committee and Town Council on the complicated American Rescue Plan funding planning. The final rules by the Treasury Department opened many more options to consider. These projects are being integrated with the upcoming budget. Only one bid was received for town auditing services and it is being forwarded to the Council for consideration.

Development Group: We held our first two meetings on the local agreements required to allow an extension to the Bolton Lakes sewer system. A community funding request was submitted to Congressman Courtney. We also submitted an ARP grant request to FEMA which is pending, and just received a call about it. Jacobson Engineering has finished up cost estimates. We are also paying attention to the treatment plant in hopes of getting Federal Rescue Act funds for a connection to Windham, with a positive first meeting held. We have received proposals for engineering consultants to review the Windham connection. We believe some state funds will assist in this study. We continue to meet with developers and finance groups interested in the Bolton town line area. Hytone Farm is starting construction for the approved anaerobic digester. They have developed an approach to avoid Army Corps permits. We have a meeting to discuss a second stage to assist in food waste management next week. PZC adopted a moratorium on cannabis retail sales and appointed a subcommittee to work on whether to allow it, and if so, under what conditions. The four-town Economic Vitality group is meeting to work out a regional events calendar and submitted an ARP grant for economic development consulting. They are looking at creating a logo. SLR, our consultant on Housing Affordability, is seeking community input and has a first draft of a framework of a plan. A reminder this study is required by State law. A survey is now available on the project web page. A community information meeting was held on March 30th and is available on the web for those who missed it. The study is anticipated to be completed by late spring. Cassidy Hill Vineyards has hired both an attorney and an engineer to prepare plans and assist them with our planning concerns of compliance. They also are working to resolve issues with the State Liquor Control Commission.

The Economic Development Commission created a subcommittee to focus on the future development at the Bolton town line. They also are held the employee “recognition of good service award program” in late April. We submitted a community funding request for a water tower for the village and sewers for the Bolton town line, which both have economic development impacts.

HR issues:

We have conducted several negotiations sessions for all Town and School AFSCME groups for pension and now have revised cost estimates which will allow us to re-engage. We started negotiations with the Police and Public Works unions. We have an agreement with the Police Union for a one year extension. We have exchanged proposals for Public Works. We had an interview panel for a new Police Chief on April 4th and have conducted second interviews with the two finalists. We have closed advertising for a replacement Cemetery Sexton and for the boating officer, and opened Youth Services. We have also made an offer for a Maintainer I, and have are awaiting the start for the new Senior Assistant and Assessor. Our new Assessor will start after Memorial Day.

Other projects:

DiBlasi Engineering conducted final checking on a few locations in CHS to allow final design work on wall repairs, which will include a construction cost estimate. Work will be conducted this summer. Some additional funds for construction will likely be needed. CHS and GHR roof plans were updated and with the additional funds from the November vote. We are still waiting for final State authorization to bid. The State delays will push off construction until next year. We are proceeding with looking at a “renovate-as-new” option for only the middle school, which would cover additional items in our capital budget and may fund HVAC including air with the State aid at 55%. The deadlines for this year are too tight so this needs to be deferred to next fiscal year for consideration. A new State program is being proposed for school air funding which we are watching.

The projects using CDBG re-spending funds to install touchless bathrooms and doors at the Senior Center and community buildings at Orchard Hills are almost complete. We also were approved for ADA funds for our three museums in Town. I have met with the Glass Museum on a proposed scope. I have a proposal from an architect to oversee this work. We will reach out to the other museums as time allows. We paused on these to allow a couple of housing rehab projects to be addressed. So likely in early summer now. Orchard Hills rehab bids will be opened soon.

Human Services has reconvened their Advisory Committee and is trying to reinvigorate the Human Rights Commission and also staff the Community Conversations initiative. They are receiving generous food donations. The next drive through food distribution at Town Hall is on May 27th at 10 AM.

We are finalizing a new path forward for the cabins at Creaser Park and plans were submitted to DEEP for review. It looks like for phase one we will demo the front two cabins since they are not really savable. The back cabin is on a slab, and it will be gutted and converted to a storage building likely with a garage door. The cabin nearest to the pavilion can be

converted into public bathrooms and a small meeting space, and can be rented out with the pavilion to have a better level of service for events like weddings. It may be something to consider if ARPA money is available. The final building will be stabilized while the condition is further assessed, options discussed, and funding allocated.